Afforestation of catchment area

3217. SHRIMATI KUSUM RAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Jai Prakash Group's 330 MW Bapsa-II project is not releasing full amount under the Catchment Area Treatment Plan for afforestation of catchment area of its hydro plants;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken in this regard;

(c) whether unscientific approach of the construction company has caused serious damage to the fragile ecological balance in Kinnaur mountains in Himachal Pradesh;

(d) if so, the action taken by the Ministry in this regard; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) As per records available in the Ministry, Baspa Stage—II Hydroelectric Project (not Bapsa—II) was accorded Environmental Clearance (EC) on 17th December, 1993 for generation of 300 MW electricity. For the catchment area treatment, a total of Rs.20.10 crore was required to be deposited by the project proponent. So far an amount of Rs.18.96 crores has so been deposited.

The funds deposition, its disbursal and utilization, are handled and supervised by the Upper Sutlej Valley Watershed Development Society constituted in the State of Himachal Pradesh.

(c) During construction of the project, the scientists of the Regional Office at Chandigarh of Ministry of Environment and Forests visited the project site and observed that the project proponent was complying with the conditions stipulated in the EC letter in order to avoid any serious damage to the fragile ecological balance of the Kinnaur mountains in Himachal Pradesh.

(d) and (e) Do not arise in view of the reply to part (c).

Pollution in metro cities

3218. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that almost all the metropolitan cities in the country are accumulating higher levels of air pollution, etc.;

(b) whether one of the steps mentioned by the Supreme Court was to make the city buses in the national capital to run on CNG, thereby reducing pollution levels; if so, whether such facility needs to be extended to all the metropolitan cities with more than 10 lakh population; and

(c) whether Government is aware of the recent introduction of green vehicles, Eco friendly vehicles; if so, the advantages of these vehicles, compared to diesel/petrol vehicles and the concessions proposed for prospective buyers of vehicles?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Rapid urbanization and industrialization and abundance of vehicles have been major reasons of air pollution in metropolitan cities. Ambient air quality is regularly being monitored under the National Air Monitoring Programme (NAMP) by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) along with State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and the Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) in 35 metropolitan cities as per 2001 census.

Ambient air quality data for the last 03 years has revealed that air quality is within the ambient standards with respect to Sulphur Dioxide (SO2). However, the levels of Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx) are exceeding the ambient air quality norms in residential areas at 08 locations in Kolkata, Howrah and Delhi. The levels of Respirable Suspended Particulate after (RSPM) are exceeding the norms in 86 out of 125 cities and towns monitored during 2008.

(b) Yes, Sir. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in its Order, fated 5th April, 2002 directed the Government to phase out diesel buses by introducing Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses in the National Capital Territory. The CNG as automotive fuel has been introduced in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Ankleshwar, Vadodara, Surat, Kanpur, Barelly, Agra, Lucknow and Agartala.

Under the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Act, 2006, City Gas Distribution (CGD) Networks would be built and operated across the country. The priority for CGD is being decided on the basis of likely availability of gas through the pipeline by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB). Separately, the Board is trying to ensure that a National Gas Grid is in place on a priority basis by identifying the gaps in the existing pipeline network for which the Board may consider inviting bids on *suo moto* basis so that natural gas is available across the country including metropolitan cities and is distributed through the CGD networks. However, the concerned State Governments are responsible for introducing/converting CNG buses in the metropolitan cities and to take steps to switch over to CNG.

(c) The term green or eco-friendly vehicle is used loosely and denotes vehicles with low or zero emissions, fuel efficiency, etc. Vehicle manufacturers have recently introduced vehicles that run on electricity and hybrid fuel which are more eco-friendly in comparison to vehicles running on diesel or petrol. The Government provides concession in excise duty on import of components for CNG and LPG kits.

Regulatory mechanism for bio-safety

3219. SHRI NANDAMURI HARIKRISHNA:
SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY:
SHRI R.C. SINGH:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: